

# Reading Assignment

## *How Adults Support Children at Work Time*



# Understanding Work Time

## How Adults Support Children at Work Time

What adults do at work time is based on what children do, their understanding of children's actions, and the questions these actions raise: "What is Christopher doing with the blocks? Does he need my support? What should I do?" Supporting children at work time is a reflective process that involves taking stock of one's own beliefs about learning and teaching, observing children, interacting with children and examining these interactions, recording findings, and eventually bringing work time to a close.

### Overview of the Ways Adults Support Children at Work Time

- Adults examine their beliefs about how children learn.
- Adults provide work places for children.
- Adults scan the interest areas to find out what children are doing.
- Adults choose children to observe, gain children's perspectives, and form on-the-spot interaction plans.
  - Adults offer children comfort and contact.
  - Adults participate in children's play.
  - Adults converse with children.
  - Adults encourage children's problem solving.
- Adults examine their interactions with children as they occur.
- Adults record their child observations.
- Adults bring work time to an end.

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### Adults Examine Their Beliefs About How Children Learn at Work Time

It is important for adults to understand their beliefs about how children learn and how this influences their interactions with children at work time. For example, an adult who believes that children learn primarily by listening and following directions would probably tend to manage and direct children during work time. In contrast, an adult who believes that children learn best on their own would probably tend to withdraw from children at work time to pursue adult tasks. Adults guided by an active learning approach, however, believe that children learn best through active involvement with people, materials, ideas, and events, and that the adult's role is to interact thoughtfully with children throughout the day to support and encourage their development.

At work time, adults are guided by the support strategies that encourage active learning and build supportive climates. The general principles of these support strategies are as follows:

- Supportive relationships with children are more conducive to learning than managerial, directive, distant, or punitive relationships.
- Playing and communicating with children in a “partnership” relationship is a more effective way for adults to support children's learning than managing them or lecturing to them.
- Valuing children's interests encourages children's initiative, control, and competence more effectively than ignoring, subverting, or redirecting children's interests.

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- Accepting children's nonadult ways of thinking and reasoning is more likely to encourage the thinking and reasoning process than expecting them to think and reason like adults.
- Encouraging children to solve problems they encounter generates more learning opportunities than solving problems for them or attempting to provide a problem-free environment.
- Ensuring that the information and activities offered are appropriate to the child's level of development is essential to effective learning experiences.
- Experimentation and problem solving are the primary processes through which children develop an understanding of concepts and relationships.
- Encouraging peer-to-peer play and problem solving promotes children's independence and sense of competence.



Research has shown that what adults believe about learning and teaching directly affects both their own actions and children's. When adults are warm, friendly, encouraging, and attentive to individuals and small groups, when they relate in a nondirective fashion with large groups, and when they encourage children to make decisions, the children

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they work with are very likely to exhibit high “task involvement, language comprehension, social participation, constructive use of materials, spontaneity, creativity, sympathy, and independence” (Phyfe-Perkins and Shoemaker 1986, p. 186). Furthermore, adults who interact with children as partners find that children will turn to them for interaction, while adults who manage children find that children turn to them for management (Wood, McMahon, and Cranstoun 1980, pp. 47–48). Also, these “managed” children seem to exhibit less ability to talk and communicate than children with whom adults interact as partners (Wood et al. 1980, p. 10).

### Adults Provide Work Places for Children

Adults in the HighScope Curriculum understand that work time, like planning time, occurs wherever preschool children have easy access to materials and people.

#### ■ Children work in the interest areas.

In a HighScope program, work time generally occurs in interest areas (the block area, house area, art area, and so forth). Adults stock interest areas with materials that attract young children. However, they also realize that children’s work-time pursuits may spread beyond the interest areas — for example, to an old rowboat outside, a garden setting, a staircase, or a kitchen sink.

#### ■ Children work in cozy and open spaces.

Wherever children carry out their intentions, it is important to note that the type of play children engage in is influenced by the size, layout, and location of the physical space. Some children will seek small, cozy places in which to play, while the play of others may call for the expansiveness and flexibility of a more open space. For example, two or three children may use the coatroom as

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a “health clinic” where they take their doll babies for their “shots.”

### Adults Scan the Interest Areas to Find Out What Children Are Doing

Sometimes adults begin work time by joining a child who requests help in getting a plan started: “I want to make a dinosaur out of big boxes, but I need you to help me make some of that sticky paste stuff to hold the newspaper on.” Or, “Come on, Sharon, I’m reading you a story!”

To identify children who do not make such clear requests, adults should periodically scan the interest areas and check the status of children’s plans. They should also take note of the social interactions, types of play, or the KDIs in which children are involved. In effect, as they scan, adults are thinking,

“I am going to interact with children in a supportive way. I need to decide whom to interact with and how. Scanning will help me find out what children are doing, what plans and play I might support, and who might be most open to support at this moment.”

#### ■ Look for the status of children’s plans.

As you scan the play space, observe each child and ask yourself these kinds of questions:

*Is Jimmy starting a plan?*

*Does he have a plan well under way?*

*Is he focused on what he is doing?*

*Has he interrupted his work on his plan? If so, why? To watch or join someone else? Because he is stuck? To get something he needs?*

*Is he completing a plan? Changing his plan?*

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Answers to such questions will help you decide which children need support. For example, you may notice that Jimmy has stopped working on his “space machine” because he has used up all the available shiny cardboard. He may be willing to consider alternative materials, if prompted.

### ■ Look for children’s individual and social interactions.

As you scan, ask yourself these kinds of questions:

*Which children are watching others play?*

*Which children are engaged in solitary play?*

*Which children appear to be playing next to someone else without any particular association with them?*

*Which children are playing in pairs? In groups?*

The answers to these questions may lead you to a child such as Crystal, who seems to be hanging about the fringes of a group of children who are playing beauty parlor. Perhaps she could use your support to join the beauty parlor play.

### ■ Look for specific types of play.

To identify specific types of play, scan the setting and ask yourself such questions as these:

*Who is exploring, manipulating, practicing something?*

*Who is constructing or making something?*

*Who is pretending, carrying out a role, role playing with others?*

*Who is playing a game of some sort?*

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These questions may lead you to a child such as Sammy, who is filling sand containers. Perhaps if an adult plays next to Sammy, she will find out more about his play and thinking.

### ■ Look for the HighScope KDIs.

Scanning for HighScope KDIs involves asking such questions as these:

*Is an activity going on right now that could be identified as a KDI?*

*How are children using movement (language, number, classification . . .) as part of their play?*

*What KDIs might be occurring as Brenda works at the workbench?*

*Might Leroy be frustrated because he needs more pegs that match the ones he has been using?*

*Might Cerise be upset because she was having fun with language but no one will listen to her?*

The answers to these and similar questions about KDIs might lead you to give Lloyd an additional box of pegs so he can continue his pegboard pattern, or to make eye contact with Cerise to acknowledge her word play.

The chart below summarizes what an adult might hold in mind in scanning the interest areas to find out what children are actually doing.

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### Adults Choose Children to Observe, Gain Children’s Perspectives, and Form On-the-Spot Interaction Plans

Scanning helps you select children to observe. Close observation helps you gain children’s perspectives and figure out an *interaction plan* to support them.

#### ■ Choose children to observe.

As you periodically scan the interest areas, particular children and play situations may draw your attention:

- A child hesitating at the beginning of his plan
- A child who is stalled in her work
- A child changing his plan
- A child soliciting help
- A child carrying out a novel or longterm plan
- A child enjoying what she is doing
- A child watching others for a long time
- A child talking to himself
- A child repeating the same activity
- A child hesitating near or trying to join an ongoing play activity
- A child exploring materials
- A child making something complex
- A child playing a game others can join
- A child having an experience that you recognize as a KDI
- A quiet or withdrawn child
- An upset or frustrated child

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### ■ Observe to gain each child's perspective.

Once you have selected a child with whom you might interact in a supportive manner, move closer to the child. Put yourself on the same physical level — on the floor if the child is on the floor, on the climber if that is where the child is playing, or on your knees by the sand table. Positioning yourself at the child's level enables you to see what the child sees and establishes you as an available partner. Maintaining silence enables you to listen carefully and give your full attention to the child's actions and words. It also allows the child to be aware of your interest and support without being interrupted by your unsolicited questions, comments, and suggestions.

### ■ Form on-the-spot interaction plans.

As you observe, focus your full attention on the child to find out more about the situation that first caught your attention — the child's plan, social



interactions, play type, or particular KDI. Your interaction plan starts with what you already know about (1) the child you are observing, (2) what typically happens at work time, and (3) what is possible at work time, given the available play space, materials,

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and human support systems. An interaction plan includes a hoped-for goal or outcome (for example, supporting the child’s plan, play, or train of thought; or finding out what the child is doing and thinking) and some possible steps for reaching it. Following are sample work-time interaction plans, as formulated throughout work time by one adult in our demonstration preschool. Although the sample interaction plans are in written form (for the sake of illustration), it is important to note that your actual interaction plans are ideas you formulate “on the spot” based on your observations.

*Brent seems hesitant to begin his plan to play with the Lego blocks because the box of Legos isn’t on the shelf where he thought it would be. I remember that yesterday Shasha put the Legos in the refrigerator to represent ice cubes. I’m going to suggest to Brent that he look there so he can find and play with them as he planned.*

*Jimmy has been working very intently on his “space machine,” but now he is hitting a juice can with a block, and he seems to be trying to get the metal bottom separated from the cardboard. If I say to him, “Jimmy, you’re banging that can pretty hard,” maybe he will tell me what he is trying to do and if and how his actions are related to his “space machine.”*

*Crystal seems to be hanging about the edges of the beauty parlor play as if she would like to join in. She’s holding a purse and some rollers and she’s watching the “beauty lady” and the lady in the chair getting her hair done. Maybe if I get a purse and some rollers I could say to her, “Hi. I’d sure like to get my hair fixed up, too.” Depending on her response, maybe we could go together to the beauty parlor so she could become part of the play.*

*Sammy seems to be enjoying himself in the sand area. He started filling a baby bottle using his hand*

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*as a scoop, then a cup as a scoop; then he turned the baby bottle over and used it as a scoop. Now he is using a funnel as a scoop and noticing that the sand can run out both ends of the funnel into the bottle. Maybe if I get a container and funnel and use them in the same way, he will say something to me about his play.*

*Benji seems very intent on sawing pieces of wood. After he cut the first piece, he laid it on top of the length of wood he was cutting from as if to guide where he wanted to make the next cut. I'm going to watch for when he finishes sawing and then say something like, "Benji, you were cutting your wood pieces very carefully" to see if he might explain to me in his own words what he was doing.*

We can summarize these five on-the-spot interaction plans in this way: Once adults have scanned the interest areas, observed a child to gain the child's perspective, and formed an on-the-spot plan

of interaction, the next step is to join a child or play group and to use the interaction strategy that is appropriate — either offering comfort and contact, playing with children, conversing with children, or encouraging children's problem solving.

### Adults Offer Children Comfort and Contact

There are times when children need immediate adult reassurance and acknowledgment of their feelings or efforts. Here are some strategies to help you identify and work with such children so they can regain their composure:

- **Look for children in need of comfort and contact.**

Children will express their need for comfort and contact in a variety of ways. Barry, for example, was not able to talk about his plan until he talked about

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the death of his cousin's dog. Dena, normally outgoing, clung to the female adults in her program for a number of days and shunned the males, saying of each one that "he looks like the man who hurt my momma." Some children are more subdued than usual. When Billy's parents were getting divorced, he tended to work quietly by himself. He barely acknowledged other children, as if focusing all his attention on materials over which he had control could temporarily make up for his lack of control over his home life. Other children become less focused, finding it difficult to concentrate on one activity for long. After her baby sister was born, Laura began to move from one material to the next, giving up any sustained activity in favor of being with adults. Some children may pout and wait for an adult to notice their feelings, while others call out incessantly — "Look it!" or "Come here!" — as if to reassure themselves that the adults in this setting are still present and responsive.



As you scan the interest areas, be aware that children in the following situations may need comfort and contact:

- Children expressing anxiety or discomfort through looks, gestures, actions, or words
- Children watching play

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- Solitary children
- Children moving rapidly from one material to another
- Children asking frequently for adult acknowledgment
- Children needing ongoing adult presence to start and continue their plans

### ■ Offer reassuring physical contact.

Sitting next to Kristina, waiting quietly in the same spot for Kwame to return from saying goodbye to his mom, touching Chavon’s hand or Misao’s cheek, rocking Jodie — such reassuring physical contacts are sometimes the most important interactions an adult can have with a child. While it is important to respect children’s growing need for independence

and autonomy, it is equally important to be there when children need a hand to hold or a lap to curl up in. Experiencing a moment or several minutes of physical comfort seems to “refuel” some children, enabling them to re-enter the more autonomous world of plans and play.

Some children will signal their need for your warmth and comfort by clinging to your leg, tugging at your arm or sleeve, hugging you, or climbing into your lap. Other children will not initiate physical contact so overtly, but will ask for reassurance through their expressions and postures, responding positively when it is offered. And some children pull away from physical contact, but respond well to an adult who is calm and nearby. Keep in mind that the type of contact that feels comfortable to adults and is well received by children varies from adult to adult, child to child, and situation to situation.

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### Nobody Paid Attention to Me When I Pouted!

#### *Why Adults May Avoid Giving Comfort and Contact*

From a distance, Michael, a preschooler, watches some children play with blocks. He has an unhappy expression on his face. Seeing him, an adult remarks, “He’s just trying to get my attention!” While young children need comfort and contact from time to time, adults are sometimes reluctant to give it for a variety of reasons. Here are some examples:

- “I wasn’t allowed to pout when I was a child, so I’m going to ignore him when he pouts.”
- “Her sad look is so annoying. I know she wants me to feel sorry for her, but I’m not going to be manipulated by her needs. She needs to learn to overcome self-pity.”
- “She’s just being stubborn. She could talk if she wanted to. If she wants me to talk to her, she has to talk to me.”

- “He could join in the block play if he really wanted to. He just wants me to help him, but I’m not going to because he has to learn to be independent. ”
- “I’m not her mom! Pulling a long face may work at home, but it won’t work with me! That’s a habit she’ll have to break if she wants to succeed here.”
- “He can sulk all he wants as long as he’s quiet and not causing trouble. I see no reason to interact with him at this time.”

Many young children rely on nonverbal communication to convey their need for contact and comfort. Such children may not yet be able to verbalize their feelings or describe what is bothering them, but they can perceive whether an adult is willing to comfort them through their own ups and downs. As mature professionals committed to educating children, it is up to us to be aware of our prejudices and to set them aside so we may provide children with the support they need to carry out their intentions.

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### ■ Offer simple acknowledgment.

Sometimes children need adult acknowledgment of their efforts and feelings. For example

*“Look it! Look it!” Vanessa calls out every few minutes. “I see, Vanessa,” an adult responds each time with a smile, looking at Vanessa’s block pile or line of animals or painting. Vanessa quickly returns to her play.*

*William stands quietly at Mrs. Elkin’s side. She puts her arm around him. “Are you feeling a little bit lonely for your sister?” she says. He smiles and returns to his building. A little while later William is back. Mrs. Elkin gives him a hug, and he then returns to his tower. The next time William seeks Mrs. Elkin out, he says quietly, “Come here.” He takes her hand and leads her to his tower. Mrs. Elkin*

*kneels down next to him. He leans against her. “It’s tall,” William says. “Yes, it is,” she agrees. He begins to build another tower next to the first. Mrs. Elkin watches for a while before joining a child at the workbench.*

### Adults Participate in Children’s Play

Participating in children’s play is one way adults can demonstrate that they value and support children’s interests and intentions. When children are playing or starting to play, and are receptive to other players, adults can sometimes join them in a nondisruptive, respectful manner. They can do this by looking for natural play openings, joining children on their physical level, engaging in parallel play with children, playing as a partner, referring one child to another, and suggesting new ideas within children’s ongoing play activities.

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### ■ Look for natural play openings.

In general, it is easier for adults to join some types of play than others. For example, an adult can usually join children's exploratory play without disrupting it simply by exploring the same materials in a similar manner. Moreover, pretend play, by its very nature, depends on others joining in and taking on supportive roles. And children's games also require more than one player. Generally, it is more natural and less disruptive to join children's exploratory play, pretend play, or games, rather than their constructive play. (Constructive play may include building a Tinkertoy house, painting, or making a birthday card. In these types of activities, children focus so much energy on the task at hand that they have little left for adults.) In scanning the interest areas for children whose play you might join, you might pick out children doing these sorts of things:



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- Children creating and experiencing collaborative play
- Children pretending and role playing
- Children moving to music
- Solitary children wanting to join others' play
- Children engaged in parallel play
- Children exploring, manipulating, or repeating actions
- Children playing games
- Children having difficulty starting a plan
- Children whose plans are interrupted

### ■ Join children's play on the child's level.

Joining children's play successfully depends on seeing it from the child's perspective and allowing the child to retain control over the play situation.

Here are some examples:

*A child is sitting on the floor, beating a tambourine and singing "Hopa, hopa, hopa." You sit on the floor near her, hold a tambourine, and wait for her signal to play your tambourine and sing "Hopa, hopa, hopa." When she gives you the go-ahead, you play and sing softly enough so you can hear her voice and tambourine above your own. When she signals you to stop, you stop.*

*"Here's some hay for you, horse," says a child, walking a rubber horse to a green bead of "hay" he has put in a "stall" built of cardboard tubes and Lincoln Logs. Sitting near the child, you make your rubber horse "walk" near the stall and then quietly whinny ("Neigh, neigh").*

Sometimes children invite adults to join their play, and sometimes adults take the initiative: "I am going to join the beauty parlor play to see if I can

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help Crystal participate.” The success of the adults’ initiatives, however, depends on their responsiveness to the specific play situation: “Since Crystal is holding a purse and some rollers, I’ll take my cue from her. I’ll get a purse and rollers and pretend I want to go to the beauty parlor, too.” Interestingly, the more adults take the initiative for joining children’s play in a respectful manner, the more children are apt to invite them in. Researchers report that when children see adults assume the role of players, they learn that adults are willing to play: “The children learn that the adult is approachable and not a remote authority figure, and they may come to trust her more” (Wood et al. 1980, pp. 157–158).

### ■ Play in parallel with children.

This strategy can be effective with children who are involved in exploratory play — using materials

for their own sake without really trying to make something or pretend with them. These children often play by themselves but are receptive to the supportive presence of others.

In parallel play, adults play near the child using the same materials the child is using in the same or a very similar manner:

**Child:** (Fills a bucket with sand, empties it out, fills it up again, empties it into a bowl.)

**Adult:** (Fills a margarine tub with sand, empties it, fills it again, empties it into a saucepan.)

The adult may introduce variations in the play; for example, she may fill a sieve or funnel with sand. It is important for the adult to realize, however, that the child may not notice these variations. And, furthermore, if the child does notice them, he may or may not incorporate them into the play.

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### What About Superheroes and War Play?

In “Superheroes and War Play in the Preschool: Let Them In or Lock Them Out?” HighScope consultant and teacher Ann Rogers (1990) points out that “historically, the themes of power, control, anger, helplessness, and fear have always, in one way or another, been part of children’s play — and for very good reasons. They are issues in the lives of all preschool children, and play is the medium they use to find out the meaning of these issues” (p. 61).

After outlining the pros and cons of banning such play or limiting it to outside time, Rogers offers a third approach that allows war and superhero play: “Stay involved in it yourself so you can attempt to move children beyond the endless repetitive quality in a way that will make the play more useful to them” (p. 62). Although this is the most difficult alternative for adults, it is ultimately the most constructive one for children who need and appreciate support in working with these potentially volatile issues. To make this approach work, Rogers (1990, pp. 62–63) offers these suggestions:

“1. Help children bring familiar experiences and materials into play.

“2. Strongly support and encourage any original ideas the children have.

“3. Help children learn how to ‘keep the lid on’ their war play so they won’t be hurt or frightened.

“4. Limit or forbid the use of commercial war toys and figures. Instead, encourage children to create their own war-play props with many kinds of open-ended materials.

“5. As children get older, help them learn to compare war-play products as they are advertised with how they really are.”

Working with children on these issues as they arise in play situations makes more sense in the long run than banning or ignoring them.

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Conversation in parallel play may be minimal.

**Child:** *I need that* (indicating the saucepan the adult is using).

**Adult:** (Hands the saucepan to the child.)

On the other hand, because exploratory play is relatively undemanding, the presence of an adult may inspire child-initiated chats about personally meaningful topics:

**Child:** *My mommy's picking me up.*

**Adult:** *Yes, she is.*

**Child:** *Not my daddy like the other days.*

**Adult:** *Usually your daddy comes, but not today.*

**Child:** *He's at his work.*

**Adult:** *He's at his work so your mommy's coming.*

**Child:** *Yep! We're goin' someplace, too, an' I know where!*

**Adult:** *You're going someplace with your mom.*

**Child:** *Yeah, my Grammy's!*

### ■ Play as a partner with children.

This strategy can work well with children involved in pretend play and games — play that by nature depends on more than one person. The key is partnership — adults functioning as equals and followers. As partners, adults enter into the spirit of the play, adjust their speech and actions to the pace and theme of the play, accept or assume a play-related role, follow rules established by the children, and take direction from children. Here are two brief examples:

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(Two boys stand in front of the mirror putting on and taking off their sunglasses.)

**First child:** *Cool.*

**Second child:** *Bad! Real bad.*

**Adult:** (Puts on a pair of sunglasses.)

**First child:** (To adult) *Hey, you bad!* (Both children giggle.) *Look at you in the mirror!* (Adult moves in front of the mirror.)

**Second child:** (To adult) *Hey man, wanna see our stuff?*

**Adult:** *Okay, man, sure.*

**Second child:** *Come on.* (Takes adult by hand.) *Sit here. We'll get the stuff.* (Adult sits on the pillow as indicated.)



**First child:** *Close your eyes. Don't open till we tell you.*

**Adult:** (Closes eyes.) *I'm scared!*

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**First child:** *Don't worry. We'll be right back!* (The children return with a grocery bag full of picture books and small, multicolored blocks.)

(Two children are playing with hand puppets.)

**First child:** (Lowers puppet behind shelf, raises puppet up.) *Boo!*

**Second child:** (Repeats same actions with her puppet.) *Boo!*

**First child:** (Repeats actions.) *Goo!*

**Second child:** (Repeats actions.) *Woo!*

**Adult:** (Does the same thing with her puppet.) *Moo!*

**Second child:** (Repeats actions.) *Achoo!*

**First child:** (Repeats actions.) *Boo hoo!*

**Adult:** (Repeats actions.) *Garoo!*

**First child:** (Repeats actions.) *Kangaroo! Hey, I know. Let's each have two puppets!*

### ■ Refer one player to another.

In the role of partner or follower in play rather than boss or leader, the adult should, whenever possible, refer one child to another for play support and expansion. This enables children to recognize each other's strengths, regard each other as valuable resources, use their abilities for the benefit of others, and play cooperatively:

**Tim:** *How do you get these all mixed up?* (Tries to shuffle a deck of "Go Fish" cards.)

**Adult:** *Joe had a good way to do it.*

**Joe:** (Takes a few cards.) *See. First, you have to put 'em all like this.* (He stacks the cards carefully.)

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### ■ Suggest new ideas within ongoing play situations.

Adults working with young children often express a desire to extend children's play. In a sense, playing respectfully in parallel and as partners with children can and often does extend the length and even the scope of some play episodes. Beyond this, however, adults may also wish to challenge, in a gentle way, young children's thinking and reasoning to expand the breadth of their play, and, consequently, their understanding. When adults attempt this type of play extension, it is important that they offer new ideas within the context of the ongoing play. From her long-term study of dramatic and sociodramatic play, Sara Smilansky (1971) suggests some strategies for doing this:

#### ***Offer suggestions within the play theme.***

**Adult:** *I brought my baby's thermometer. (Hands the "doctor" a wooden Tinkertoy.)*

#### ***Address the role person rather than the child.***

**Adult:** *Doctor, can you check my neighbor's arm? He hurt it at the fire. (Rather than "Sadie, let Gibby play with you.")*

#### ***Respect the child's reaction to your idea.***

**Adult:** *Doctor, her temperature's going up. She's warm.*

**Child:** *I'll check her after lunch. Here. (Hands her a magazine.) Look at this till I get back.*

**Adult:** *Thanks.*

**Child:** *Want me to bring her some milk and fries?*

**Adult:** *Yes, please, doctor.*

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### What? *Me, Play? You've Got to Be Kidding!*

Playing with children does not come easily for some adults. Wood et al. (1980) report that reluctant adults come up with all kinds of reasons to avoid playing with children:

Play is for children, not adults.

Adults upset the delicate balance of children's play.

It is wrong for adults to intrude. They spoil things.

Playing with children is too repetitive and boring.

Adult ideas destroy children's creativity.

It is more important for children to play with other children than with adults.

It is too embarrassing. What if someone sees me!

I would lose my authority with children if I did what they wanted me to do.

It is important for adults who are uncomfortable playing with children to be aware of their feelings and weigh them against the benefits of playing respectfully and joyfully with children. When adults play with children, the children experience adults as supporters and resources, people who want them to succeed.

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### Adults Converse With Children

There are moments when conversation is a natural outgrowth of children's work or play. Adults look for these opportunities to converse with children as partners, following their leads and asking questions sparingly so children retain control of the dialogue. The more children converse, the more they put into words their own thoughts and experiences, and the more involved they are in interpreting and understanding their world.

#### ■ Look for natural opportunities for conversation.

The relative simplicity of exploratory play sometimes inspires young children to talk either about what they are doing or about an apparently unrelated topic. Pretend play relies heavily on role-related conversation, and games often involve verbal negotiations over rules and process. There are times

during constructive play when children pause to take a look at what they have done so far or to consider a problem. A conversation is more likely to occur at these times than when children are wholly involved in making something. Also, children who have interrupted, completed, or changed their plans may find that conversing with an adult can help them clarify what they have done or intend to do next. Here are some examples of work-time situations that may lead to such conversations:

- Children describing what they are doing
- Children pretending and role playing
- Children exploring, manipulating, or repeating actions
- Children pausing during play
- Children talking during games
- Children interrupting, completing, or changing their plans

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### ■ Join children at their level for conversation.

At its best, conversation is an intimate exchange between trusting people. For such conversations to occur, adults position themselves near the child *at the child's physical level*, so children are not “looking up” to adults and adults are not “looking down” on children. For the most part, this means that adults spend a lot of time squatting, kneeling, sitting, and occasionally even lying on the floor. Adults must “shrink” to the children’s size so children and adults can converse easily and comfortably.

### ■ Respond to children’s conversational leads.

When adults make themselves available for conversation with children during natural pauses in their play, and when they are silent yet attentive, listening patiently and with interest to ongoing conversations, children are likely to address adults directly or make the first move toward involving them in conversation:



## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Child:** (Wipes hands on smock and studies collage she is making.)

**Adult:** (Squats down next to child and looks at collage.)

**Child:** *This is for my mom.*

**Adult:** *Ah, something for your mom.*

**Child:** *It's a . . . It's not done.*

**Adult:** *Oh.*

**Child:** *I'm gonna put some of that twisty stuff on right here and those things he's got.*

**Adult:** *You mean acorn tops like Ryan's using?*

**Child:** *Yeab! Acorn tops. We picked 'em up didn't we?*

**Adult:** *Yes. We found the acorn tops on our walk.*

**Child:** *An' Lila found that stick, and you jumped over it!*

**Adult:** *You did, too!*

**Child:** *Yep! (Pauses) I'm gonna put a stick on and those tops. A lot! (Turns back to her work.)*

**Adult:** *I'll come back to see what it looks like with the twisty stuff and the stick and the acorn tops. (Moves toward another child.)*

### ■ Converse as a partner with children.

As partners in dialogues with children, adults resist taking control of the conversation. Instead, they try to pass conversational control back to the child at every opportunity. Adults do this by sticking to the topic the child raises; making personal comments or affirmative utterances that allow the conversation to continue without pressuring the child for a response; waiting for the child to respond before taking another conversational turn; and keeping their comments fairly brief.

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

Adults often wait for the child to open the conversation, but may also initiate conversation, leaving it up to the child to decide whether to continue the exchange. An appropriate way to open a conversation with a child is to begin with a comment or an observation. This gives the child control over their response and, consequently, over the direction of the conversation. In the following examples, note how the adults give conversational control to the child by opening with an undemanding comment, and then leaving the direction of the conversation to the child:

**Child:** (Brushes the coat of a fluffy stuffed dog.)

**Adult:** *My dog Stanley likes to have his coat brushed.*

**Child:** *So does my doggy. He hates baths.*

**Adult:** *Stanley doesn't like baths, either.*

**Child:** *Sometimes, I have to put him in the tub.*

**Adult:** *I bet he tries to get out.*

**Child:** *He tries to get over the side, and then he shakes the water all over the place!*



**Tyson:** (Standing at the workbench with a car he has made.)

**Adult:** *You made a very long car, Tyson.*

**Tyson:** *I got this long piece and this 'nother piece on top.*

**Adult:** *Yes.*

**Tyson:** *These are the wheels.*

**Adult:** *They really turn.*

**Tyson:** *It's gonna be a speed racer.*

**Adult:** *A speed racer.*

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Tyson:** *It's gonna have speed racer stripes right here and here.*

**Adult:** *Then it will really go fast.*

**Tyson:** *Yeah. Red stripes. That's the fastest color.*

**Adult:** *I didn't know that.*

**Tyson:** *Yeah, 'cause my brother's is red, and it's the fastest one.*

**Adult:** *I see.*

**Tyson:** *I'll show you how fast when I put on the red.*

**Adult:** *Okay!*

### ■ Ask questions responsively.

While asking questions is a commonly accepted teaching method with older children, questioning younger children can be tricky. Our questioning styles can either dampen conversations or stimulate



them, depending on how responsive our questions are to young children's play and interests. Questions that dampen conversation tend to be questions about facts that are obvious (e.g., "What color is

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

that?” “Which board is longer?” “Is that a house?”) and questions unrelated to the situation at hand (such as asking a child who is coloring, “Have you had your juice yet?”). According to Wood et al. (1980), these “test-type questions are a violation of normal conversational etiquette and the child seems intuitively aware of this fact. Adults tend to resort to test-like questions when they focus on topics and tasks beyond the child’s comprehension or interests. Furthermore, in a drive for answers, they fail to share their own views and reactions with the child” (p. 178).

A string of adult questions also tends to put the adult in control of the conversation. As Wood et al. (1980) point out, “If the adult maintains the dialogue largely through questions, children’s answers tend to be terse. [In such cases,] once the adult has the conversational bit between her teeth, her questions may even override the spontaneous offerings of the children. Indeed, the tendency to ignore children,



## Understanding Work Time (continued)

talk over them, and generally dominate the proceedings prevents rather than encourages children's thought and conversation" (p. 65). Questions that tend to stimulate conversation are used sparingly, they relate directly to what the child is doing, and they ask about the child's thought process.

**Ask questions sparingly.** Adult questions are a conversational tool to be used with care. Such questions can help children contemplate, describe, and become more aware of their own thought processes. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that our main purpose is to support the children's desire to ask and answer *their own questions*.

An adult may ask a question to start a conversation but then should follow the course set by the child. Wood et al. (1980) characterize this style as "asking a question to get the child to say something, and

then stepping back, taking the pressure off, either by making a contribution or by making an utterance that effectively fills your turn in the dialogue. [This style enables the child to] . . . elaborate on the theme and to take off in a direction that he chooses himself, presumably along the line he feels most interesting" (pp. 67, 69).

**Child:** (Watching the fish in the fish tank.)

**Adult:** (Watches next to the child for a while.)

**Child:** (Points to one fish.)

**Adult:** *What's that fish doing?*

**Child:** *He's waiting for his daddy.*

**Adult:** *Oh, he's waiting.*

**Child:** *See that big one down there? He's the daddy, and he's waitin' for him so they can go around together.*

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Adult:** *I see.*

**Child:** *They both have those tails like that. Kinda pointy. That's how you know.*

**Adult:** *Oh, the pointy tails mean they go together.*

**Child:** *Yeah, that means they're the boy and the daddy. Once I got lost.*

**Adult:** *Oh, dear!*

**Child:** *I couldn't find my daddy. He finded me.*

**Adult:** *He didn't want to lose you.*

**Child:** (Pointing to fish.) *Now they're together.*

**Adult:** *Like you and your daddy.*

**Child:** *Uh-huh. There they go.*

Curiously enough, the fewer questions we ask young children and the more we listen and

converse with them as partners, the more likely they are to see us as sympathetic listeners and, hence, to ask us questions of particular interest to them:

**Child:** *(Rocks her stuffed dog.)*

**Adult:** *(Rocks a stuffed dog next to child.)*

**Child:** *Does your father live with you?*

**Adult:** *No, he lives in Canada with my mom.*

**Child:** *Well, does that man, Bill, live with you?*

**Adult:** *Yes, Bill is my husband. He lives with me and Stanley.*

**Child:** *Stanley's a boy dog, right?*

**Adult:** *Right!*

**Child:** *My doggy's a boy dog, too. His name is Sky Star.*

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Relate questions directly to what the child is doing.** This strategy is another way of following the child's lead. Even though the adult is asking the question, it is based on everything she understands about the child at that moment. When the question grows out of the immediate situation, it is more likely to add to rather than take away from the conversation. For example, in the conversation about fish, the adult asks about the fish the child is pointing to. As the conversation continues, the adult asks another question that grows out of the exchange:

**Child:** *That fish only gots one eye.*

**Adult:** *How can you tell?*

**Child:** *'Cause look. That's all you can see.*

**Adult:** *I see. You can see only one eye.*

**Child:** *Yeah, one eye right on the side up by his nose.*



**Ask questions about the child's thought process.** Questions that stimulate conversation focus on thought processes rather than facts. "How many eyes does the fish have?" demands a factual answer, which by the way, the adult already knows.

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

In contrast, the adult asks the question, “How can you tell?” in response to the child’s observation that the fish has one eye and encourages the child to describe how he arrived at the conclusion. Only the child has the answer to this question, so it is a question well worth asking. Furthermore, in the process of answering the question the child has the opportunity to consolidate what he knows and recognize how he knows it. Questions that inquire about children’s thinking and reasoning include these:

*“How can you tell?”*

*“How do you know that?”*

*“What do you think made that happen?”*

*“How did you get (the ball) to . . . ?”*

*“What do you think would happen if . . . ?”*

Again, ask these questions sparingly and in relation to what the child is doing. Also, be alert for answers the children give to their own unspoken questions:

**Child:** (Building a block tower.) *It’s getting higher!*

**Adult:** (Watches and nods in agreement.)

**Child:** *It’s higher than even me!*

**Adult:** *Yes, it is!*

**Child:** *Uh oh. It’s moving.* (Tower falls.) *Oh, no!*

**Adult:** *Oh, dear!*

**Child:** (Studies the fallen tower.) *It was too heavy. Up there.* (Holds hand out, indicating where the top of the tower had been.)

**Adult:** (Supplying what she thinks might be the child’s unspoken question.) *That’s why it fell?*

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Child:** *Yeah. It couldn't keep that big block up.*

**Adult:** *It couldn't keep the big block up.*

**Child:** *It wasn't strong enough. I know what!* (He begins to rebuild the tower.)

### Adults Encourage Children's Problem Solving

Throughout the day in any stimulating environment, young children encounter physical problems (“This piece won't fit!”) and social conflicts (“He took my truck!”). Adults who support children's active learning encourage them to grapple with child-sized problems rather than give up in frustration or turn to adults to patch things up.

Not all adults encourage young children to solve their own problems. In fact, some adults attempt to

provide a trouble-free environment. They admonish children not to argue, and step in at the first sign of trouble to provide whatever direction is needed to keep things running smoothly. For example, a child making a book hits the stapler, but no staples come out. Noticing the situation, a nearby adult says, “Here, let me fix that for you.” She opens up the stapler, sees that the staples are jammed, pulls out the jammed staples, and hands the stapler back to the child, saying “Now it will work.” Other adults attempt to mediate disputes and problems so wrongs are recognized and punished. In such a setting, when a child making a book hits the stapler and no staples come out, a nearby adult says, “You've hit the stapler so hard, the staples are jammed.” She then proceeds to unjam the stapler and puts it up on a shelf beyond the child's reach. “Maybe you can have another try with it tomorrow after you've had time to think about using it properly.”

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

### Sharing Conversational Control

Based on their observations of adults and children, Wood et al. (1980, p. 73) devised a framework for identifying who controls a conversation. In conversational moves 1–3 below, the speaker retains control of the conversation. In moves 4–5, the speaker offers control to the listener:

- Speaker retains control
  1. Enforced repetition (“Say ‘Night, night’ to baby.”)
  2. Closed question (“Is your baby crying?”)
  3. Open question (“Where are you taking your baby?”)
- Speaker passes control to listener
  4. Contribution (“I used to take my baby to the park.”)
  5. Acknowledgment (“I see.”)

As they observed, recorded, and analyzed the recordings of adult-child conversations, the researchers came to these conclusions:

- “The adult with the least controlling style on our particular measure asked relatively few questions and made a high proportion of contributions.
- “The adult who exercised least control over children was much more likely to be questioned and to hear unsolicited ideas from children, and was far more likely to have their questions not simply answered but elaborated upon.
- “Generally speaking, all children followed contributions and phatics [acknowledgments] with contributions of their own. In other words, each child responded conversationally to noncontrolling adult moves, so adult questions are not the only device for keeping a child involved in dialogue.
- “By leaving the child more turns that are not directly controlled, the adult provides an opportunity for the child to put their own ideas into words and, on occasion at least, a chance to ask the adult questions.
- “By leaving the child time to think and periodically taking the pressure off to reveal something of their own thoughts, the adult most likely to see the child linguistically most active” (pp. 79–81).

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

In a HighScope setting, adults encourage children to solve their own problems. They believe that as young children work through the problems they encounter, they learn firsthand about how things work, begin to see things from a variety of perspectives, and develop selfconfidence. Consider how the stapler episode would evolve in a HighScope setting: A child making a book pounds on the stapler and notices that no staples come out. He shakes the stapler and tries again without any luck. He leans on the stapler with both hands but it still doesn't work:

**Child (to nearby adult):** *Hey, this thing's not working.*

**Adult:** *Sometimes, if you open it up, you can see what's the matter.* (The child does this.)

**Child:** *They're in there, but this one is . . . is . . . is going the wrong way.* (He tries to pull out the jammed staple with his fingers, then gets a pair of

blunt-edged scissors, which he uses to pry off the staples.) *There. I got it! Now let's see.* (He tries the stapler once again. This time it works.)

### ■ Look for children involved in problem situations.

Problems may arise in any type of children's play, and it is important for adults to be looking for children in need of support. In particular, children involved in constructive play, more so than those engaged in exploratory play, may encounter problems simply because they generally have a clear goal in mind and may have to overcome unexpected obstacles to achieve it. Also, children who have stopped working on their plans may have done so because they are having difficulty solving a problem. Here are other examples of some problem-solvers in work-time situations who may need your assistance and support:

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

- Children recognizing and solving problems (“How many do I need?” “What will fit?” “What will go with this?” “How can I make this look right?” “What goes next?”)
- Children developing strategies for dealing with social conflict
- Children whose projects are not working
- Children who have interrupted or are changing their plans

### ■ Allow children to deal with problems and conflicting viewpoints.

Children are, by nature, problem-setters and problem-solvers. They can and do solve many problems on their own. Sometimes adults, who are more efficient problem-solvers than children, have to

restrain themselves from interfering prematurely with children’s problem-solving attempts. Here are some strategies to help adults practice such restraint:

***Sit down with children.*** Do this as often as possible rather than remaining highly mobile throughout work time. While you must remain alert to what is going on in as much of the play space as possible, by having to get up and walk over to the problem-solvers, you give children more time to sort things out on their own or generate their own solutions to try.

***Give children time to use their own problem-solving skills.*** Even if you move close to problem-solvers, wait to offer assistance until children ask, or until they have made an attempt at a solution and seem about to abandon the effort.

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Refer one child to another.** Whenever possible, refer problem-solvers to other children who have the skills to help them at the moment. This empowers the child who assists and enables the problem-solver to view peers as resources:

**Child:** *Darn! I can't get this open!*

**Adult:** *Yesterday, I saw Rina open her glue bottle. Maybe she could help.*

**Child:** *Hey, Rina! How you do this?*

**Rina:** *I'll help you. See, you push this up like this.*

Listen to conflicting viewpoints. Children frequently disagree with each other. Some adults may want to keep children from arguing, but a more appropriate response would be to listen to the conflicting views and encourage children to elaborate these views:

**Adult:** (Reading the story of how the elephant got his trunk. Stops to look at the picture.)



## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**First child:** *He's a nice elephant.*

**Second child:** *No he's not, he's bad.*

**Adult:** *What makes you say that?*

**Second child:** *'Cause he went down to the river when he wasn't supposed to.*

**Adult:** *Yes, he went down to the river.*

**First child:** *No, he's nice. He's just a nice little baby elephant.*

**Adult:** *Yes, he's a baby.*

**Second child:** *Read some more.*

**Adult:** *Okay. Let's see what else we find out about the baby elephant at the river.*



## Understanding Work Time (continued)

### ■ Interact with rather than manage children.

When adults interact with children, they play and converse with them as partners. When adults manage children, they retain the upper hand by passing out instructions and warnings: “You need to go wash your hands.” “You need to find something else to do. It’s too crowded for you to play here.” “That’s too much glue. Take just a little bit.” “Three more minutes till you have to get off the trike.” Not only does adult management prevent children from confronting and working with child-sized problems it also limits or curtails more beneficial and enjoyable adult-child interactions. Here is an example of two adults approaching the same situation in different ways, the first through interaction and the second through management:

**First child:** *Yip, yip, yip!*

**Second child:** (Pretends to eat out of “dog” dish.)

**First adult:** (Patting both “dogs.”) *Nice doggies.*

**First child:** (Sits up and “begs.”) *Yip, yip!*

**First adult:** *Let me see if I have a bone for you.*  
(Finds a pretend bone in her pocket.) *Here, doggy.*

(Several other “dogs” join the play. The play continues with the “dogs” finding ways to make themselves “dog beds” and rearranging them so there is room for each new “dog.”)

**Second adult:** (Across the room, flicks lights off and on.) *There are too many children playing dogs and there’s too much yipping. You two can stay in the block area, but the rest of you will have to find something else to do.*

The children who are encouraged to work together to find space for their dog beds have a very different experience from those being shooed out of their

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

play space. While prevention of the problem may be a more efficient short-term approach, encouraging children to solve the problem for themselves accomplishes more in the long run because of the opportunities it provides. However, supporting children through the problem-solving process will require a greater degree of adult involvement than solving the problem for them.

Furthermore, as Wood et al. (1980) noted in their observations of adult-child interactions, “[Adult] management seemed to breed more management, [adult] interactions, more interactions. Where an adult herself usually initiated contact with children for purposes of management, children often came to her for similar purposes. Their spontaneous overtures took the form of requests for turns and arbitration, questions about when story time was and other basically managerial functions. However, where the adult was holding a conversation with

children or playing with them, the opening from a ‘new’ child was much more likely to be a request for her to play with them, help them with something, or simply to talk” (pp. 47–48).

### ■ Calmly assist with unresolved conflicts.

When conflicts arise that children are unable to solve on their own, approach calmly, use the following problem-solving strategies, and be prepared to give follow-up support:

#### ***Acknowledge children’s feelings.***

**Adult:** *You both look pretty upset.*

**First child:** *I’m angry!*

**Second child:** *This is getting me mad!*

**Adult:** *So you’re angry and you’re mad.*

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

### *Gather information.*

**Adult:** (Pause.) *Tell me what's happening here.*

**First child:** *I need that big, big box.*

**Second child:** *I had it first.*

**First child:** *You weren't using it!*

**Second child:** *I was going to use it.*

### *Restate the problem.*

**Adult:** *It seems that both of you need a box.*

**First child:** *I need it for my house so I can get into it.*

**Second child:** *Well, I need a big box to put all these papers in.*

**Third child:** *Box! Me!*

**Adult:** (To third child.) *You need a box, too.*

**Third child:** (Nods in agreement.)



## Understanding Work Time (continued)

**Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.**

**Adult:** *So we have one big box and each of you wants to use it. How can we solve this problem?*

**First child:** (Thinks.) *I could use it first and you could use it the other days.*

**Second child:** *I need it now.*

**Third child:** *No. Mine.*

**Adult:** *Everybody needs the box now, today.*

**Second child:** *We could all get in.*

**First child:** *Yeah!*

**Second child:** *But don't sit on my papers.*

**First child:** *We could put 'em in a bag and then put 'em in.*

**Third child:** *Me, bag.*

**Second child:** *Let's all have bags, okay?* (The other children nod yes.)

**Adult:** *So, you're all getting in the box and each person has a bag to put papers in.* (Again, the children nod yes as they move into action.)

### Adults Examine Their Interactions With Children as They Occur

As they offer comfort and contact, play, converse, and support children's problem-solving efforts, adults in a HighScope setting also maintain an awareness of their own actions and the effect they are having on the situation. They do this by asking themselves these types of questions:

*"What is happening to Jenny's play as I interact with her?"*

*"What am I learning about Jenny?"*

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

*“What should I do next with Jenny? Continue what I am doing with her? Change what I am doing? Withdraw?”*

No matter how well we know a child, we cannot always predict how the child will respond to our words and actions. By interacting with children on their level, that is, by playing with children, examining what we are doing as we do it, and reflecting on how our actions support children’s active learning, we assume the role of learners ourselves even as we support children’s learning.

### Adults Record Their Child Observations

So much goes on at work time that it is easy to lose track of all the things you learn about individual children — how they play, whom they play with, how they carry out their plans, what interests them,

what KDIs can be identified. Recording this information enables adults to share and analyze their findings at the end of the day so they can plan for the next day.

Different recording techniques work best for different people. If you do not already have a way of recording work-time findings, here are some ideas to consider:

- **Take mental “snapshots” of children’s actions and words.** As soon as children are napping or have left for the day, file through your mental pictures, and jot down specific notes about what individual children said and did.
- **Take photos with a digital camera or tablet.** Children enjoy seeing themselves and the photos will serve as reminders as you talk over the day with team members.

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

- **Jot down the child’s name or symbol and key words or phrases about specific things a child did and said.** Some adults leave clipboards or pads and pencils in the areas for this purpose. Others put file cards or sticky notes in their pockets. Often, children become interested in what adults write and offer to add their own comments in whatever form of writing they are currently practicing — scribbles, pictures, letters, their names, invented spellings, actual words, and so forth. When children see adults writing about them, they understand both that adults value what they are doing and adults depend on the act of writing to remember important things.

### Adults Bring Work Time to an End

Putting toys and materials away creates a transition from working to recalling in the plan-do-review sequence. Adults generally alert children a few

minutes before the end of work time so they can come to a natural stopping place in their play. Cleanup time, as with the rest of work time, is a time for problem solving, playfulness, and realistic expectations.

#### ■ Encourage problem solving.

At the end of work time, some children deal with the problem of how to continue play that is not quite finished. They figure out on their own, or with the support of adults, how to complete what they are doing — either at the moment, later on in the day, at home, or during work time the next day. For example, at the end of one work time, two children continue working on a large puzzle they have almost finished so they can bring it to recall. Then they help put other puzzles and toys away. Another child puts the special materials he needs to finish his dinosaur inside the box he is using so he

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

can continue to work on it at home. He puts some of the paper he has been using in his dinosaur box, then puts the rest on the art shelf.

Figuring out how to save what they are working on is another problem some children face at the end of work time. For example, several children have built a “cave” out of blankets and rocks. Instead of taking it down and putting the blankets away, they want to save it to play in after nap time. They discuss their plan to save the cave with an adult who supports their idea, then they make a “Work in progress” sign to hang on their cave.

Putting toys and materials back in their containers or on the shelf so they can find them the next time they need them is another problem children solve at the end of work time — a situation that generally calls upon their sorting and matching skills. Children enjoy figuring out how to use mops, vacuum cleaners,



brooms, and sponges because they get to use the real tools that grownups use. For example, two young children run a tank-type vacuum cleaner. One guides the hose while the other pushes the tank. Although it takes some time for them to co-

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

ordinate their efforts, the two children are pleased with their accomplishments, and the house-area floor is free of the pine cone bits and sand left over from “dinner.”

### ■ Play put-away games.

Some children derive a great deal of satisfaction out of stacking blocks back on a shelf, hanging up dress-up clothes, washing paintbrushes, and sorting stones and shells; other children do not. At the end of work time these children are ready for a change of pace. They see no particular problems to solve, they have completed their plans to their satisfaction, and now they are happy to cruise the areas and engage in rough-and-tumble play with other like-minded children. Sometimes, these children will join and contribute enthusiastically to physically active put-away games such as tossing all the inch cubes into the inch-cube box, seeing how many big

blocks can be carried at once, racing against the sand timer to put all the dollhouse furniture back on the shelf, setting up a “fire brigade” line in which items are passed from child to child until they reach their shelf or container, or playing peddler and gathering stray toys into a sack.

### ■ Maintain realistic expectations.

For many adults, cleanup time is not a favorite segment of the day. In fact they worry that some materials will not be put away, that some children will not help, that putting away toys will take too long, that they will tend to direct rather than interact with children, and that if another adult is observing this time of day, that person will find fault in all these areas of concern. In fact, some or all of these situations probably will occur on any given day. Here are some strategies to help you cope with them:

## Understanding Work Time (continued)

- **Focus on supporting children’s problem solving and play.** Approach cleanup time, like any other time of the day, from the child’s viewpoint.
- **Remain calm and optimistic.** Generally, within ten minutes the interest areas will be in decent shape.
- **Work along with the children to put toys and materials away.** This keeps the spirit of play and problem solving alive. Enjoy children’s energy and ingenuity.
- **Begin recall time even if there are still materials left to put away.** It makes more sense to go on to recall than to prolong the end of work time. Sometimes the remaining materials can serve as useful recall reminders.



# How Adults Support Children at Work Time: A Summary

## ***Adults examine their own beliefs about how children learn at work time.***

### ***Adults provide work spaces for children.***

- Children work in the interest areas.
- Children work in cozy and open spaces.

### ***Adults find out what children are doing.***

- Look for children's plan status.
- Look for children's individual and social interactions.
- Look for specific types of play.
- Look for key developmental indicators.

### ***Adults choose children to observe, gain children's perspectives, and form on-the-spot interaction plans.***

### ***Adults offer children comfort and contact.***

- Look for children in need of comfort and contact.
- Offer reassuring physical contact.
- Offer simple acknowledgment.

### ***Adults participate in children's play.***

- Look for natural play openings.
- Join children's play on the child's level.
- Play in parallel with children.
- Play as a partner with children.
- Refer one player to another.

- Suggest new ideas within ongoing play situations.
- Offer suggestions within the play theme.
- Address the role person rather than the child.
- Respect the child's reaction to your idea.

### ***Adults converse with children.***

- Look for natural opportunities for conversation.
- Join children at their level for conversation.
- Respond to children's conversational leads.
- Converse as a partner with children.
  - Ask questions responsively.
  - Ask questions sparingly.
  - Relate questions directly to what the child is doing.
  - Ask questions about the child's thought process.

### ***Adults encourage children's problem solving.***

- Look for children involved in problem situations.
- Allow children to deal with problems and conflicting viewpoints.
  - Sit down with children.
  - Give children time to use their own problem-solving skills.
  - Refer one child to another.
  - Listen to conflicting viewpoints.

- Interact with rather than manage children.
- Calmly assist with unresolved conflicts.
  - Approach calmly.
  - Acknowledge children's feelings.
  - Gather information.
  - Restate the problem.
  - Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.
  - Be prepared to give follow-up support.

### ***Adults examine their interactions with children as they occur.***

### ***Adults record their child observations.***

### ***Adults bring work time to an end.***

- Encourage problem solving.
- Play put-away games.
- Maintain realistic expectations.

Adapted from: Epstein, A. S., & Hohmann, M. (2012). The HighScope plan-do-review process. In N. A. Brickman, J. Burd, J. Tangorra, & M. Weiner (Eds.), *The HighScope preschool curriculum* (pp. 282–306). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.